

South Plains College Continuing Education  
Creative Writing – Memoirs  
Spring 2020

Dr. Roy Bearden-White / Department of English  
SPC Lubbock Center 113

February 6, 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.  
February 13, 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.  
February 20, 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.  
February 27, 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.

**Optional Texts and Resources:**

Phifer, Nan Merrick. *Memoirs of the Soul: a Writing Guide*. (2011) ISBN: 978-0984206001  
King, Stephen. *On Writing*. (2010) ISBN: 9781439156810  
Steele, Alexander. *Writing Fiction: The Practical Guide from New York's Acclaimed Creative Writing School*. (2003) ISBN-10: 1582343306

**N.B. Access to a computer with printer and Internet access is highly suggested.**

**Required means of communication:** All electronic correspondence for this class will be sent to your southplainscollege.edu address, so it is your responsibility to monitor the account on a regular basis.

**Suggested Texts and Supplies:**

A standard collegiate dictionary, such as *Merriam Webster Collegiate Dictionary*  
A flash drive or internet cloud storage.

**Course Description:** Some of the first stories human beings ever shared with others were simple accounts of people's lives. Throughout history, the memoir has served as a reflection of our humanity, a written record of our individual experiences. This course will help you focus your writing inward and provide you with the necessary tools to tell your story. We'll discuss how memoirs differ from other forms of writing, such as fiction, personal essays, and autobiographies. We'll explore different strategies for recollection and reflection. We'll look at techniques for narrative point of view, description, character creation, dialogue, conflict and resolution. If you've ever wanted to put your own story in writing, here is your opportunity. This course is a general introduction to creative writing and should be suitable for both beginning and advanced writers.

**How to Contact me:**

Office: Levelland Campus, CM 103d

Office Hours: Mondays and Wednesdays 11:00 a.m. to 12:15 p.m.  
Tuesdays and Thursdays 9:30 a.m. to 10:45 p.m.  
Fridays 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.

Other times by Appointment

Office Phone: 806-716-4030

Email: [rbeardenwhite@gmail.com](mailto:rbeardenwhite@gmail.com) or [rbeardenwhite@southplainscollege.edu](mailto:rbeardenwhite@southplainscollege.edu)

**Course work:** As a continuing education course, there will be no quizzes, tests, or exams. I still plan for this course to be an interesting learning experience. As with most things, though, what you get out of the course will be equal to what you put into the course. Never assume that any question is too obvious or too basic. I encourage you to join in the discussions.

**Workshops:** The heart of all creative writing classes is the workshop experience. Many beginning writers, though, don't realize the wonderful benefits that workshopping a new or even a revised work can provide. We will follow a prescribed routine during workshops.

The Author: The author should bring enough copies of a text for everyone. Upon introducing a new work, the author will be allowed to read his or her work and then speak about the text for one or two minutes maximum in describing strategy or concerns. At that time, I would like you to articulate briefly what you were trying to accomplish, where you think you were going, where you think you went right, and where you think you went wrong. You may also express other concerns you might have. You may speak for **no more than two minutes**. For the remainder of the workshop on that text, the author must remain quiet. The workshop is not a defense and the author will not be allowed to explain his or her writing beyond those introductory comments. If the readers don't understand what you were attempting to do or get your message, then, as a writer, you simply need to learn how to better express yourself. A primary purpose of the workshop experience is to help you better your craft and sometimes, as you will find, that is a hard lesson to learn.

Everyone Else: When you get a copy of the reading, the first thing you should do is put your name on your copy of the work, which will be handed back to the author at the end of the workshop. You should have as many extensive, detailed, specific, and insightful suggestions and comments written upon your copy of the texts as possible. Each student is expected to participate in workshop discussions and to do so in a responsible and mature manner. Any conduct that disrupts the learning experience may, and probably will, lead to disciplinary action, which may include removal from the course.

**Reading:** I once watched an interview of a pop musician who claimed that he never listened to any music but his own. He said that he wanted his creativity to be original and to not be influenced by other artists. I cannot empirically say that he lied, but I can call this pompous nonsense. Writers, like musicians and other artists, do not exist in a vacuum. Good writers have a strong sense of not only where the profession is today, but also know where it has been and how it has moved. Good writers read, a lot. Stephen King said that "If you don't have time to read, you don't have the time (or the tools) to write. Simple as that." In order to master the techniques and skills of writing, you have to know and understand what other writers have tried and achieved or have tried and failed. Reading is the single most important way to improve your writing. As you travel on your creative writing journey, you should read a great deal. Good writers are good readers. Remember, do not be a passive reader, but constantly consider and critique how the text works and how best to incorporate aspects into your own writing.

**Genre:** The focus of this course is the writing of memoirs, but something should be said that applies to any creative writing course. While writers invite readers to follow them to new and often interesting places, there is a discussion about where a writer should not go. Any submission that constitutes erotica or employs language, details, events or characters for pure shock value will not be accepted. If you are uncertain whether something you've written or intend to write will be acceptable, stop by my office and ask.

**Grammar:** While I will be the first to admit that many popular writers, like Cormac McCarthy, consistently ignore grammar, I will also point out that professional writers have earned the right to ignore the rules of language and do so as part of their authorial message. Writers should not violate the rules due to ignorance or laziness. I believe that to express yourself in language requires that you not only understand and know how language works but that you also understand how readers interpret the written language. For that reason, grammar is vitally important to new writers. This short course, however, is not designed to address writing issues such as grammar, syntax, and formatting. If you need help in this area, let's talk outside of class.

**Student Code of Conduct Policy:** Any successful learning experience requires mutual respect on the part of the student and the instructor. Neither instructor nor student should be subject to others' behavior that is rude, disruptive, intimidating, aggressive, or demeaning. Student conduct that disrupts the learning process or is deemed disrespectful or threatening shall not be tolerated and may lead to disciplinary action and/or removal

from class.

**Cell Phones, Ipods, Blackberries, Laptops, etc.:** I don't know many people who love electronic gizmos more than I do. Not only are they usually incredibly useful, informative, and even educational, they are also typically fun to use. Because of the enormous benefits technology can provide, I do not want to categorically forbid electronic devices from the classroom. With that said, however, electronic gadgets can be quite disruptive in a classroom. In order to negotiate this potential problem, I will need your cooperation in following two simple guidelines:

- The classroom is a communal environment which requires each student to respect the learning experiences of the others. Please consider how your devices may impact, and in some cases simply annoy, others who sit near you.
- You enrolled in, and paid for, this class with a specific purpose in mind, whether it is to improve your writing skills or to fulfill a core requirement. While surfing on Facebook, text-messaging a friend, or playing Pokémon Go might be more fun, realize that such actions will impair your progress in this class (and yes, by progress I do mean your final grade).

**Students with Disabilities:** Students with disabilities, including but not limited to physical, psychiatric, or learning disabilities, who wish to request accommodations in this class should notify the Disability Services Office early in the semester so that the appropriate arrangements may be made. In accordance with federal law, a student requesting accommodations must provide acceptable documentation of his/her disability to the Disability Services Office. For more information, call or visit the Disability Services Office at Levelland Student Health & Wellness Center 806-716-2577, Reese Center (also covers ATC) Building 8: 806-716-4675, Plainview Center Main Office: 806-716-4302 or 806-296-9611, or the Health and Wellness main number at 806-716-2529.

**Statement of Nondiscrimination:** It is my policy not to discriminate on the basis of age, color, disability, ethnicity, gender, national origin, race, religion, sexual orientation, or veteran status.

**Statement of Diversity:** In this class, I will continually strive to establish and support an environment that values and nurtures individual and group differences and encourages engagement and interaction. Understanding and respecting multiple experiences and perspectives will serve to challenge and stimulate all of us to learn about others, about the larger world, and about ourselves. By promoting diversity and intellectual exchange, we will not only mirror society as it is, but also model society as it should and can be.

**Campus Concealed Carry:** South Plains College permits the lawful carry of concealed handguns in accordance with Texas state law and Texas Senate Bill 11. Individuals possessing a valid License to Carry permit, or the formerly issued Concealed Handgun License, may carry a concealed handgun at all campus locations except for the Natatorium. For a complete list of campus carry exclusions zones by event, please visit <http://www.southplainscollege.edu/campuscarry.php>

**Other concerns:** I strongly encourage you to visit me during my office hours to discuss any other problems or concerns that may affect your performance in this class.

Creative Writing – Memoirs  
Class Schedule  
Spring 2020

**The following sequence of topics is merely a guideline. Student interests, questions, and concerns will always take precedent, so the schedule of our class discussions will remain flexible.**

**Week One**

Thursday 2/6

Day One

**In Class First Hour:** Introduction to class, purpose of writing, truth versus fiction, legal, emotional, and ethical concerns of memoirs, memories and description

**In Class Second Hour:** Introduction to various writing exercises, discussion of writing habits

**Homework:** Imagine an important place that you visited often and where you always felt comfortable. What do you remember? What sights, sounds, smells, or even tastes are associated with that place? In no more than two pages (Times New Roman 12 point font, double space lines) describe that place.

—Print out \_\_\_\_\_ copies and bring them to the second session, so we can workshop your writing.

**Week Two**

Thursday 2/13

Day Two

**In Class First Hour:** Developing characters, creating dialogue, narrator’s voice, pacing

**In Class Second Hour:** Introduction to peer review and writing workshops

**Homework:** Pick a single conversation with one other person that impacted you. Maybe it inspired you. Maybe it changed how you saw the world. Maybe it revealed your mistakes. In no more than two pages (Times New Roman 12 point font, double space lines) describe that conversation.

—Print out \_\_\_\_\_ copies and bring them to the third session, so we can workshop your writing.

**Week Three**

Thursday 2/20

Day Three

**In Class First Hour:** Organization and outlining, structure and theme, conflict and resolution

**In Class Second Hour:** Workshop

**Homework:** A difficult writing experience can be dealing with emotion. Pick a moment that you experienced a strong emotion and, in no more than two pages (Times New Roman 12 point font, double space lines), describe that emotion.

—Print out \_\_\_\_\_ copies and bring them to the third session, so we can workshop your writing.

**Week Four**

Thursday 2/27

Day Four

**In Class First Hour:** Revision and Editing, Publishing

**In Class Second Hour:** Workshop